

August 20, 2003

TO: Early Childhood Supervisors

FROM: Ellen Frede, Ph.D., Assistant to the Commissioner
Office of Early Childhood Education

SUBJECT: Preschool Homework
Preschool Celebrations (Graduations, Proms, Fashion Shows etc.)

Homework Guidelines

The implementation of the *Preschool Teaching and Learning Expectations: Standards of Quality* will create an environment where children learn to appreciate themselves, feel competent, and develop the social skills necessary to interact positively with others. Children's early literacy and other academic skills will be enhanced through challenging but appropriate curricula in our preschool programs. Activities that build on children's interests and are geared to individual developmental levels will strengthen learning. Through peer interaction and adult support, children advance and new activities can be introduced. Young children learn through play, social engagement and intellectually stimulating problem-solving.

While we encourage teachers to establish a strong school/home connection, activities such as tracing letters or pasting shapes into photocopied models are not developmentally appropriate for in-class and therefore should not be given as homework assignments.

Preschool staff should communicate the goals of the program to parents through orientations, informal and formal parent meetings, workshops, handbooks etc. They should also provide ideas to parents that will reinforce what is being experienced at school. Encourage parents to have informal conversations with their children and of course, read to their children daily. Teachers can encourage parents to allow the children to develop grocery lists, set the table for meals and help with other daily tasks. Other suggestions may be developed from the examples given in the Preschool Teaching and Learning Expectations and given to parents. Written ideas can be individualized to particular children's interests and needs. Remember to involve parents in the process. Care should be taken to develop and communicate a system that considers the parents time and responsibilities. Sharing observations and anecdotal notes will help the parents know more about their children. In return, parents will feel more comfortable sharing information with the teachers.

“Homework” if given, should help parents to listen attentively and learn more about their children. It should allow parents to see that there are many ways to support and teach their children. “Homework” that promotes quality time between parents and their children is therefore appropriate.

Preschool Celebrations

There should be times for celebrating and for bringing closure to the children's time together. These large group times however should be active, designed around children's interests, and take place for a length of time that is appropriate for the children.

Often, traditional preschool graduation ceremonies require a time period of practice that is too long for children and center on adult-planned activities. Sometimes, children are required to wait for long periods of time, and memorize speaking parts and new songs. The practice sessions may create a high level of stress for both children and teachers. Also, some children are uncomfortable and distracted when required to wear different clothing such as a cap and gown.

An appropriate end of the year celebration should be participatory and meaningful for all the children. Familiar music and movement activities, reciting poems and finger plays, or acting out a familiar story are all appropriate choices to incorporate into the designated day. The celebration will be most comfortable for the children, if it takes place in a familiar location such as the classroom or familiar outside area. Of course, parents and family members should join in the day as participants or observers.